



Maintain and Stay Sane through the Holidays Campaign



Week six focus: Wrapping it all up

Planning ahead...A new way of looking at New Year's Resolutions!

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves. – Bill Vaughn

A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one Year and out the other. – Anonymous



It's that time of year again when we eagerly think about and prepare our list of New Year's resolutions. But turning them into reality is a difficult task for many people, as well-intentioned goals fall into the "oops," "Well, I really meant to..." or other category of wishes that did not quite translate into action. More than 80% of people who make resolutions do not meet their goals. As a matter of fact, of the 56% of people world-wide who make New Year's resolutions, less than half follow through with them to the end of January! Lack of planning, making goals too vague or unrealistic, or committing for the wrong reasons can contribute to failing to realize New Year's resolutions.

In order to be successful and stick with your goals, it is important to think and plan ahead. "People don't plan to fail; they just fail to plan." Take time to plan, in detail, your resolutions. Resolutions tend to fail because they are not well thought out. They tend to be a knee-jerk response to that yearly question, "So, what resolutions am I going to make this year?"

Plan your resolutions based on your life goals. This can be viewed as your long-term plan. What do you really want out of life? What are your dreams or aspirations? Define your passions in life. Think in terms of categories such as health (both physical and emotional), career, relationships, spirituality, and finances. Tie short-term goals to your long-term goals. What small changes or steps will you make along the way to achieve your long-term goals? Short term goals are realized sooner, so you get the satisfaction of achievement along the way.

Health related behavior changes, such as losing weight, top the list as the most common New Year's resolutions in the United States, yet our society continues to grow literally. More and more Americans are moving into the obese category. Perhaps it is time to look at a different and more realistic approach to making lasting lifestyle changes. Rather than a New Year's resolution, why not a New You resolution?



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So, what does a pie have to do with setting goals?



If you have ever taken an economics class you are probably familiar with the Pareto Principle, better known as the 80/20 rule. The 80/20 rule is based on an observation by an Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923). He made the observation that 20% of the people of Italy owned 80% of the wealth. Since Pareto's time, other studies have also shown that in other areas of life, 80% of results are generated by 20% of activities. The 80/20 rule also applies to living a healthy lifestyle. By focusing on the 20% of activities that generate 80% of health-promoting results, even busy and stressed out people can live healthier.

So, what are some of the few changes that can generate the greatest health-promoting benefits?

Stress reduction is critical for healthy living. As discussed in week four of this campaign, chronic stress can lead to stress-related illnesses and health problems. Stress management is absolutely necessary for effective weight loss and long-term weight management. Even people who exercise regularly and follow a healthy, balanced diet may not lose weight and belly fat without stress reduction. Take five! We are a stressed society. For every hour of the day spent working or working out, take five minutes to do some slow, deep breathing, stretch, or meditate. Clearing the mind and taking a few minutes for yourself will help relieve stress, which will in turn put you in a good mood. Putting aside some extra time each day to really relax, which means removing as much sensory stimulation as possible, will do wonders for your energy levels.

Laugh...laughter is not only great for building core muscles, but it is a great stress reliever, burns tons of calories, increases mood...basically, the benefits of laughter have been shown to have positive effects on the mind, body, emotional and social well-being. Laugh hard and deep so you can live long and be young!

Getting an adequate amount of sleep is an important factor for healthy living. Sleep plays an important role in regulation of endocrine function and metabolism. Chronic sleep deprivation can have significant health risks. Studies have shown that sleep deprivation is associated with increased risk of weight gain and obesity, as well as type-2 diabetes. Our bodies and brains need adequate rest so that they can busy themselves with other work. During the day we are so busy sensing the world and living our lives that we do not have the capacity to do much else. Being unconscious shuts down our senses and allows the brain to process the information, and the body to heal. It is extremely important to get the right amount of sleep for your body, especially the brain, to function effectively.





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Drinking the right amount of water a day is not only good for our bodies, but it can help with weight loss by curbing the appetite. The body is approximately 70% water, and we need to be hydrated for proper functioning. Water is also instrumental in flushing out toxins. Drinking plenty of water may mean more bathroom trips, but it also means fewer cravings for sugary and salty foods by giving a sense of fullness, less appetite, and flushing out the system.

Healthy eating is essential for living a healthy lifestyle. Even busy people can make easy and sustainable changes to an unhealthy diet slowly. For example, if you are one of the super-sized, fast food fanatics, try exchanging to the regular-sized fast food meal, and adding a healthy salad, fruit or vegetable. In a week or two – as you slowly retrain your brain and taste buds – exchange one fast-food meal completely with a healthy meal. You can continue to increase the proportion of healthy meals and snacks versus junk food until you are eating healthy meals most of the time. Be patient – this process can take some time. Occasional slips of eating an unhealthy food from time to time may not be that bad since it can prevent feelings of deprivation and resulting binge eating.



Dr. Oz and Dr. Roizen, authors of the YOU book series and realage.com, compare our fuel and waste systems to that of an automobile. When our bodies use fuel (food), there are natural byproducts (waste). On the cellular level, these are called free radicals, which can cause cellular damage and many times result in cancer. When we eat the right amount of food (slightly below what we need to function), our bodies turn to fat stores for fuel. Fat combustion is a far more efficient fuel (which means less waste and oxidative damage) than the glucose that comes from our digestion.

Buy whole foods – whether canned, frozen or fresh from the farm – and use in place of processed foods whenever possible. Avoid foods and drinks made with corn syrup, a calorie-dense, nutritionally empty sweetener that many believe is worse for the body than sugar.

Nutrition experts agree that it is not important to be 100% to achieve results, instead eat nutritiously 80% of the time, and then allow yourself to indulge 20% of the time (in moderation)!

Physical activity is important for healthy living. At one time the human race was extremely active. Our ancestors fought and hunted every day to stay alive. Our bodies are designed to be active and exercise is absolutely necessary to our total health. Lack of regular exercise is an important contributing factor for the growing obesity epidemic in the United States. The problem is that many people usually do not have a lot of time or energy for physical activity. Try making exercise an excuse! How about an excuse to spend time with family, like snow shoeing or taking a walk together? Make it an excuse to get things done like house cleaning and maintenance.



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Incorporating NEAT movements is another way to slip in some extra activity. Non-exercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT) are small movements – such as tapping your feet, stretching your legs, doing small squats when standing – which are essential for a healthy metabolism. These short bursts of exercise throughout the day can add up to a big weight loss down the road. They can burn as many as 500 extra calories a day or even more. NEAT can be an easy way for busy people to increase their physical activity.

The side effects of these healthy changes are almost effortless weight loss and lasting weight control. Looking better and feeling better can be very motivating, which results in sticking to a healthier lifestyle. Small changes can make a big difference in terms of living well and living longer. For example:

Take 350 days out of 365 days (one year) and make one small change in activity which equates to burning an additional 10 calories per day (such as parking the car further away, using the stairs, getting up to change the television station rather than using the remote control – you can think of dozens of ways to expend an additional 10 calories per day!). So, if we multiply 350 days by 10 calories a day, we get an additional 3500 calories per year burned, or one pound! Doesn't sound like much on its own, but make a few more small changes, and they can add up to significant health benefits in the long term! Small steps head us in the right direction one step at a time! You do not get to the top of a staircase in one leaping, do you?



By experiencing the benefits of healthy living – including looking good, feeling better and having more energy – previously unhealthy individuals can be motivated to make even more health-promoting changes. Instead of just doing 20% of health-promoting activities that can generate 80% of their results, maybe you can finally have the energy and motivation to live a healthy lifestyle most of the time!!

One last thought: PREVENTION, PREVENTION and more PREVENTION! Now is the time to schedule annual physicals for all family members, and to make sure immunizations and screenings are all up-to-date as well. “An ounce of prevention truly is worth a pound of cure!”

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyNewYear/>

http://discoverysedge.mayo.edu/apples_and_pears/index.cfm

<http://management.fortune.cnn.com/tag/pareto-principle/>

www.realage.com

www.webmd.com